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## The nest of the Grey-headed Flycatcher *Mionectes rufiventris*

by Glayson Ariel Bencke

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Although nests of most species presently assigned to the Neotropical genus *Mionectes* are already known, that of the Grey-headed Flycatcher *Mionectes rufiventris* of southeastern South America seems to be undescribed. The only reports on its nesting are from Argentina. Peña (1979) gives the measurements of two eggs of *M. rufiventris* apparently from Misiones without mentioning the nest. Castelino & Saibene (1989) report on a Grey-headed occupying a nest of the Sepia-capped Flycatcher *Leptopogon amaurocephalus* from the previous year and a pair carrying nest material to a round, hanging structure of moss with side entrance also in Misiones. These nests held clutches of three white eggs in September and early October.

In February 1990, during field work at Monte Alverne (29°33'S, 52°20'W), Santa Cruz do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul State, southern Brazil, I discovered two nests of the Grey-headed Flycatcher. The first

was found on 16 February (collected on 29 May) and contained three white eggs. It was an elongate, moss-covered pyriform structure 85 cm high and 18 cm wide suspended from a Commelinaceae vine about 0.7 m above a small stream inside primary forest. On 18, 22 and 27 February, incubation continued. I captured the presumed female on the 18th. She was moulting on the head and showed a noticeable olive-green colour on the crown. Measurements taken were (in mm): bill (from base to tip) 11.9; wing chord 67; eggs  $19.6 \times 15.5$  and  $19.5 \times 15.7$ .

The second nest, hanging over another small stream in secondary forest about 1.3 km east of the first site, was empty on 17 February. It was similar to the first, including measurements, and was hanging from a pendent vine 1.8 m above the water. As this nest still appeared to be unoccupied on the 26th, I collected it for studies.

The nests consisted of an elongated, cone-shaped 'roof' and a round nest chamber, completely enclosed and supported by the former. The roof was almost entirely of living moss, with a few slender twigs and dead leaves interspersed. Blackish fibres (probably fungal rhizomorphs) attached the moss to the supporting vine. In nest 1 the fine roots of the vine continued to grow inside the moss, increasing the attachment of the moss to the support. The latter ran inside the roof for almost all its length, emerging from it only behind the nest chamber (Fig. 1).

Inspection of the nest chamber's structure showed it to be unexpectedly complex. I could identify as many as 7 layers of material in the



Figure 1. Nest of Grey-headed Flycatcher *Mionectes rufiventris* from Monte Alverne, southern Brazil. Outer cover is mostly of fresh moss.

*Mionectes* species are rather homogeneous with regard to nesting behaviour. So far as known, they are lekking birds that display at dispersed groups in the forest understory. Their nests are similar in being pendent ball- or pear-shaped structures suspended from hanging vines, aerial roots or slender twigs, usually over a stream in forest interior, and clutch-size is near 3 (Pinto 1953, Skutch 1960, Wetmore 1972, Willis *et al.* 1978, Snow & Snow 1979, Oniki & Willis 1983, Sick 1985, Skutch 1985). Moss is cited as the main material used in nest construction except for *macconnelli* (Pinto 1953, Willis *et al.* 1978, Oniki & Willis 1983), which is regarded as the closest relative of *rufiventris* (Willis *et al.* 1978, Willis 1992). However, the site of all but one nest described for *macconnelli* is a somewhat dry Amazonian forest

(Reserva Ducke, Manaus) where moss is scarce (E. O. Willis pers. comm.), and hence the general absence of moss in these nests probably resulted from local environmental conditions affecting nest material availability rather than divergent nesting behaviour of this species. Even nests of other *Mionectes* species are likely to lack moss coverage under particular conditions (Skutch 1960).

At Monte Alverne, breeding activities of *M. rufiventris* seem to occur late in the season as compared with the records cited above from Misiones (just 2–3° to the north) and with other birds in the Monte Alverne study area (most nests with eggs or young were concentrated from December through February; G. Bencke, in prep.). This is indicated by the facts that in nest 1 eggs were still unhatched as late as 27 February and lek activities at this site were in progress even in late December of the following year. Perhaps breeding is adjusted so as to match the ripening time of some fruits in these deciduous broad-leaved forests, or the species may make more than one nesting attempt per year.

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